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NOW

The Student

WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY
WINSTON-SALEM, NORTH CAROLINA
FALL 1989

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1989/90

FALL 1989

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Photograph of My Pregnant Grandmother

Hands on hips like naked wings, she stands there
her hair and eyes the color
Of fresh-turned soil. I can smell
The warm coffee on her breath,
Her stained fingers, the dust of 1942
Thickening the air. The cigarette burns
Down, dull next to the glow
At her waist, white-hot as the moon.
Back arched, bowing with the weight,
She stares up, watching the clouds
Glide and glide away, just waiting
There on the porch
At the edge of the world.

Cathy Eisenhower

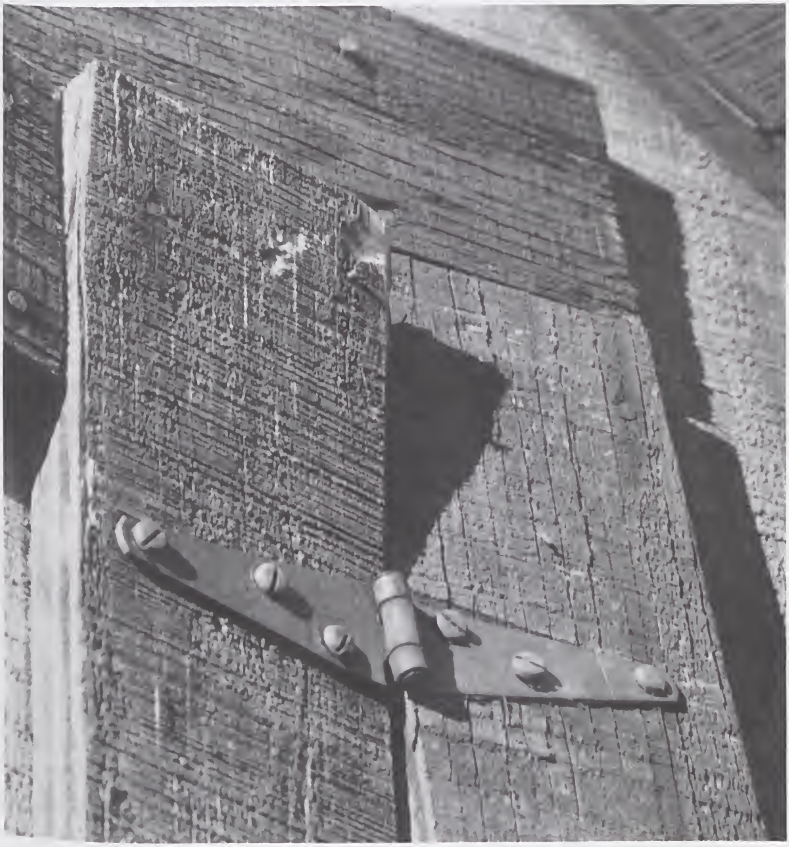
A Spring Flower

A spring Flower
Pink
Delicate as a whisper
Fresh, new, virgin.

And a steel combat boot
Approaches.
Lifted, two feet above the flower,
By a metallic soul.
The Flower stares up,
Straight from the ovary,
Into the huge metal spikes.
Now, one foot above.
The spikes glare with a shiny vengeance.
Sharp, pointed straight to the center of the Flower.
Each petal has a heavy, slow glance.
A huge spike approaches
In direct line with the flower's center.
The spike enters and destroys.

And, in an instant,
The flower is quelled
By an incognizant Foot.

Jenifer D. Rainer



THERESA HARPOLD

Mike's Birthday Party, at the Community Clubhouse

Fifth grade. I was not ready. I had been a tomboy my whole life. I played dolls occasionally, but that was not until later. Mike Parks had a birthday party. It was the first time I can remember being concerned about what I looked like. I mean we, me, Michelle Bailey, and Tara Chase, wore make-up, curled out hair. Michelle and Tara got to wear pantyhose. My mom wouldn't let me. I decked myself in tights, navy, long sleeved leotard, pale blue, and skating shirt, pink, blue, and white. Both Michelle and Tara were wearing similar outfits, except they were wearing tan Leggs'. We walked together down the hill to the community clubhouse. Some kids got dropped off in cars. We all had presents, and I brought him a glass mug with his name M-I-K-E printed in red on it.

There were parents everywhere, but after the cake and candles, they seemed to melt together into one reserved quiet couple in the corner room. The parents let the birthday boy put the lights out and turn on the disco ball. Then began the dance. 45's scratched out into the darkness from a cheap stereo. Some of the more popular guys asked girls to slow dance. Me and my companions stood by the record player gossiping and giggling at them. A fast song came on. Now was our chance. We all were dancers, and we all fancied ourselves Disco dancers.

We performed a routine, a line dance, replete with spins, claps, and jumps. Then we launched into a series of acrobatic maneuvers, flipping end over end, flying through the air. I did round-offs, back walk-overs, and straddle jumps. Tara could flip. The whole thing was quite ridiculous. We won the crowd. They wanted more so we gave them a version of the New York Hustle. By then I knew we had attracted the attention of the cutest boys, Mike, Clarke Haywood, and Chris. I especially like Clarke. Most kids were in and out of the kitchen area, gobbling Cheetos. I was over by the drink table fixing a Pepsi when Mike came over and asked me to join a game — a game of spin the bottle.

I said I had never played. He explained it to me. Shocked, I followed him over to the lobby where fifteen or so kids had gathered in a circle on the floor. They were sitting boy-girl-boy-girl. Someone made room for me and the birthday boy, and the game was under way. I watched the bottle being spun by a girl named Monica. She got another girl named Sherry. We all laughed

apprehensively and then she spun again. She got Clarke. They had a pretty quick kiss and I thought he didn't like her. This made me feel better. Then he spun, and got my best friend Michelle. She thought he was cute too, so I watched her face closely. More experienced than I, she matter-of-factly leaned over and laid a big, long kiss on Clarke. Her blond hair fell over their kiss till it was over, and all of us were glued to the spot. She sat back down, her face slightly red. I looked at her, and eventually she looked at me, and I saw something there. I blushed deep and averted my gaze. She spun, and the Pepsi bottle landed on Chris. She kissed as boldly as before, but for a shorter time. After all, Chris wasnt' as cute as Clarke. Then Chris, unabashed, spun — and got me. Immediately my heart seized up on itself, then let out several hot torrents of blood through my head.He was leaning forward, and I leaned forward, though a little awkwardly, and we kissed. His lips were hot and slobbery. They were big, and part of them covered the corner of my mouth. The other parts were mostly on my cheek. I didn't know how long it was supposed to last, but before I could fully consider this idea, he broke our embrace, and I sat back down. I looked at Michelle and she smiled at me. I could not smile. My lips felt dead. They were wet now, so I licked them, trying to get them dry.

But it was not over yet, because now I had to spin. With a flick of my wrist, the bottle was going, and I prayed to God that I wouldn't get Ron, who I thought was gross. The bottle slowed, approaching Ron, but then it went past him and stopped on Clarke. I had fantasized about this very event, and was happy and miserable at the same time. But the happy seemed to outweigh my dread, so I leaned forward to meet him over the bottle. My lips, drawn away from him remained cool, while the rest of my body warmed over. I'm sure my face was beet red, but I really didn't care.

And the game went on fairly uneventfully after this, though I had to kiss each guy at least once, and only Ron never spun me. Michelle kept getting Chris, which I thought was funny because his kisses were so slimy. Tara wanted to, and got Mike a few times, and I knew she liked him, so I thought that was great. Kisses went around and around, till most of us got pretty bored with the whole thing. It was around 7 p.m. and Mom wanted me back early like she always did, so I had to leave. Everybody else stayed until nine, and from what I heard danced some more and ate a whole bunch of pizza. I wished I could have eaten pizza, especially with pepperonis. Tara had spent the night with Michelle (they were

allowed to sleep over even on week-days) confessing their opinions on who was the best kisser, the worst, the longest, who tried to French-kiss, who they liked, who liked them, and on.

I went to bed thinking my world was changed. For up until tonight I had never thought that such a game existed. I had liked a couple guys before this, but never did I think I would want to kiss them. And now that I had, I didn't know if I ever wanted to do it again. But I remember the feeling of kissing Clarke, and how everyone watched us, and somehow, the remembering of it ushered in strange thoughts with which to dream about.

From the Vietnam Memorial

Black wall
Darkly reflecting
The pain and loss
Of war,
The price of freedom.
A man kneels
By the Name
Of a comrade,
A brother,
And cries
As the child
In his lap
Brightly looks
Into the sunrise.

Rebekah Morris

Late-Night Shift

Old Sue, been here fifteen years,
never missed a day. Now double chins hang
from her jaw like flags from a pole.
Loraine's as old as the grease but can't quit.
Charcoal hair and garnet lips
defy her snowy face.
Sydney's black and still dreams of freedom.
Waitresses shout orders to him
since he can't read the tickets.
Chris just wants to feed his little girls.
Smoke from his Marlboro lifts
his hope toward dull fluorescence.
Lee shuffles from bucket to bucket,
mumbling and grunting,
"Damn dirty dishes .. Stupid old bitch."
And I, virgin cashier, see these stains
scattered about the linoleum,
and I scrub them each night.
But try as I might, the dirt won't move.

Sages, all, wiser than I can pray to be,
yet still chained to the grime
that's hard to reach
unless
you get down on your knees.

Scott x Stubbs

Wind and Tides

The grey street's slick beneath his feet.
He lifts his collar to his chin
As fall winds snarl about his sleeves
And underneath his overcoat. His thin
Galoshes crunch upon the fallen leaves;
How wet with rain, their colors fade
With every step upon them taken!
The woody smoke from his old pipe
Paints a hazy, swirling stripe
Across the air that bites his skin.
The crunching leaves forever bade...
The earth is warm, the wind is cold,
The man is growing old and old.

Can you see it in the stone
From which your very soul was carved?
The passing of another age
Into another age's form.
With each crashing of a wave
And every wind storm o'er the land,
The Master turns a mountain
Into just a simple mound of sand.
As the wind bites at your sleeve
And the waves wash o'er your bones,
Do you see your own life pass
Beneath the torrents of time's storm?
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust,
The ages pass, and so we must.

Does it all come down to This?
The world's a pulsing place of life
As each heart beats and each face smiles
And tears are shed for joys and strife.
The tide may come with ripping fury,
Eating at the rocky shore,
But soon it sinks back into the sea,
And that tide's gone forevermore.
Though we live through passing tides
And see a new moon come and pass,
We, too, shall flow and we shall ebb
And sink into the still, chilled mass.

He pulls his collar to his face
And tries to draw his shoulders
In against his cold and shivering bones
Beneath his furrowed, weathered skin.
But ever grows the bitter din ...
The howling wet November gale
That erodes his body, like the shore,
And turns his face a whiter pale.
He recollects his days of youth,
His mountainous goals, his waves of strength.
He recalls them within his bones
And he wonders if he must
Allow his strength to ebb away
And empty dreams to turn to dust.

Katy Pugh

OLD MAN AND DEMOCRACY PARADE

Leaking Oil Pan

Following opals
That rain through this gutter
Like a melting prism,
I find grass that kneels.
It kneels like a seabird
Encased in oil.
It kneels like a child
In prayer.
It will become
A dead riverbed.

* * * *

In the museum
Bones arch up
Like a derrick.
I imagine forty tons of flesh
Slowly chewing
The upper leaves of a palm.
I feel three huge chambers
Throbbing like the sun.
Digging into stratum after stratum,
I finally smell black blood.

* * * *

When I found the corroded metal,
When I saw the thick, dark trickle,
I looked down the street
At each car —
Fords, Chryslers, Pontiacs —
Benignly pressing the asphalt.
I thought of each street in town
Humming with engines.
I thought of maps
And connect-the-dots:
Highway 258 from Comfort to Pink Hill,
Highway 24 from Piney Green to Maysville.
Puffs of blue smoke,
Black beads beating onto the road,
And I, ashamed,
Add two quarts.

Larissa Teigen

SHAWN HOSHALL

The Time Before the Storm

I feel like I'm floating in a sea of vomit. Just another day. I had an appointment to go to the dentist you see my teeth are rotting at the roots but this appointment I had missed because, for reasons unknown, my alarm clock had not awoken me. Perhaps a power shortage, well anyway I was disappointed in a dull sort of way, for the pain one can experience by having their teeth poked and prodded has always interested me. "No Novocaine", I whimsically used to tell my dentist. At first, of course, he wouldn't hear of if but when I promised not to squirm he reluctantly consented.

"a very odd request" he said to me once.

"What is pain," I answered back and the conversation ended.

But the day was not completely lost since there was one other chore to do for this month. I have a cat named Cat and it had been a while since I had fed her Cat's food running out some time ago. She was looking rather listless and, in fact, on the verge of changing into a less efficient structure. Of course you have every right to disagree with me, but I am completely right and totally wrong.

I had been in bed for about a week thinking of nothing and sleeping little. When I did think of something it was this tiny crack on the ceiling above my bed. I knew this crack was very important but I couldn't say why. I also knew that it would be impossible for this crack to be very unimportant. Eventually I came to the conclusion that a why answer wouldn't elaborate on the knowledge I already knew. I was content.

I felt that I should eat food before embarking on my journey to get Cat cat food. In the cupboard I had six white powdery doughnuts left from a dozen. They were aged and hard. I stuffed one in my mouth and, forgetting to chew this first doughnut, I stuffed a second in my mouth, the result was predictable. I was unable to consume the doughnuts. A fatal error, a wrongness. I watched tv while I ate. The picture was lots of white fuzz casually flicking up and down, never exactly the same speed. The fuzz is different or I am different, my beliefs and outlooks of who I am have changed and are changing. No longer is Santa a perceived reality. I should watch more tv.

Out the door I go. I live in the city and the market is down the hill across

from the park. I walk down the hill. I walk into the park. A preacher preaches there and tells me I will burn in hell unless I believe as he does. I answer back that I do believe as he but I must burn in hell anyway because I can't step into heaven as long as a soul suffers for eternity. I knew that any reply with ordered words I chose to speak was very unimportant. There is no wrongness in this man. He was taught his beliefs as a tribesman is taught to worship the sun or a Moslem is taught of Allah. A goodness a important facet of organized society.

My reply to the preacher relates to a dream I once had. I was standing in a large crowd. We were watching the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus was looking rather placid at first, but suddenly lifted his head, pulled his hands out of the cross, nails and all, jumped off the cross, and headed for the crowd. Everyone started running away except me. He came up to me, grabbed my collar and dragged me to the cross. He then proceeded to lay the cross down, take the nails out of his own hands and bang those nails through my hands and into the cross with his fists. The cross was then righted with me on it and Jesus walked away appearing none too happy. I was rather indifferent to the dream and I am surprised that I remember it now. I see the entrance to the market. The place where I am to buy Cat's cat food.

There were three brands of cat food in the market. I was uncertain as to which brand to buy. Three hours were spent in analyzing the merits and disadvantages of each bag. I had never seen them before. I concluded that the brand I had previously purchased months before contained more goodness than the other two. The bag was large and heavy. A chore it would be to carry it through the park and up the hill to home.

People were no longer in the park after I left the market. I know why. The wind was swirling. Leaves were blowing and trees were swaying. The sky was dark. It was the time before the storm. When I was younger if people asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up I would tell them the time before the storm for it is invisible, everywhere, nowhere, all knowing, brainless, invincible but dead, it has no restrictions, no inhibitions, nothing.

Quickly it came and quickly it left. The rain was now here whipping me sharply as I ascended the hill to home with Cat's cat food. This is my life. Life is good, a pleasure, a purity and soon I will be dead but wasness is onlyness and onlyness is perfectness. My name will live on for eternity.

I am nearly frozen....

I am nearly frozen:sloth and lethargy have acted in concert,
as alcohol and heroin ally, to immobilize me.
The smell of stagnant water is the worst odor,
says my father. I know it is not so noisome
as the stench of a stagnant mind.

the Dead Poet

there is a special providence
in the rustle of the trees ...
the winds only capture.
they of fact consume years in pursuits of proof
of what the head's eye cannot see
here
is the faith you need.

Joe Tappe

Early Morning

Morning is coming across the wrinkled valleys
coming over the spines of fenceposts
she is coming to open her many windows.

But my house is dim and quiet
as a submarine.

The blue hum
of the refrigerator marks
depth after depth.

And the mops, the brooms, and rakes
in the garage all sway
like kelp.

My parents wait,
under oceans of blankets.

Outside, lamps are lit in the damp grass,
and the sunlight carves seconds
till the morning shimmers like scales.

Susan Anderson

Eulogy

Old man, you were my childhood
Which died in the night,
quick and numb-
without warning,
leaving me in mid-morning
        grasping with two hands a teacup
        filled with soda-
sharing cookies with you
        two dolls and a
        stuffed elephant.
You strode into the kitchen and took off your hat to me,
carrying in your scent of pine and fresh dirt
        and strong soap;
never still until you laid down in your box
        and went to sleep.
I had to look in to see you sleeping.
I thought to see my final destiny-
But instead I saw my life
        in the two large hands crossed on your chest
which had broken ground and milked cows and
balanced tiny plastic saucers and cups-
Cups like the one I grasped now with tiny hands,
stretching up on tip-toe
to touch it to your lips and lay it by your side,
stretching until I stood above the casket
and looked beyond the lid and the wall behind
        out to the sea and the mountains and the sky.
It is all buried now,
under ashes and dust.
Buried with you, Old Man,
You who broke the heart you helped to make
        and which you help to mend.

"Thank you for the tea parties,"
I whisper at your grave.

Amanda Eller

MELONEE EATMON

Mashburn, N.C.

Lodged between the ancient sedimentary layers of an Appalachian mountain and the bank of a wide, shallow river called the French Broad, there lies a town called Mashburn, North Carolina. Mashburn's not a very big place at all, and someone coming to Mashburn for the first time might be tempted to say there just isn't much there. Of course, not too many people come to Mashburn for the first time. Most everybody that knows about Mashburn were born there. Still, if somebody did come to Mashburn from out-of-town, and if they did say there's not much there, for the most part, they'd be right. But, for a town made up of one street (since one street is all that would fit between the mountain's cliff and the French Broad) Mashburn has as many quirks and curiosities as its two stoplights will hold.

Mashburn's big claim to fame is that it's the county seat. The people of Mashburn are pretty proud to have the county courthouse in their town, and, when a debate ensues with a resident of a neighboring town on the virtues of the residents' fair villes, respectively, a true citizen of Mashburn will never fail to make this point foremost in his argument. As is to be expected, the courthouse stands tall in the middle of Main Street. (A misnomer, since as I said before, there's only one street anyway.) And it's located almost exactly between Mashburn's two stoplights, which are placed strategically at either end of the street. The building, of course, is the best maintained of all the buildings in Mashburn. One could never guess, I suppose, just by looking, how old the building really is. Partly, though, this is due to the massive face-lift the state granted Mashburn the money to perform just two years ago. The overhaul was an elaborate one, in which the entire dome-roof of the courthouse (its crowning glory, of which Mashburn is most proud) was removed and was laid in the front yard of the building. The dome is so huge that it hung out partially in the street, obstructing traffic, creating a terrible mess, and causing a god bit of inconvenience. But the citizens of Mashburn didn't seem to mind. Just as long as the courthouse was preserved.

There was some speculation, though, that the entire building should

be duplicated in a safer spot than the one where the courthouse was built. There is, according to a prominent geologist that came through Mashburn in its heyday around the turn of the century, a huge and loose boulder hanging on the side of the mountain above the hallowed building. A boulder big enough, the geologist claimed, to destroy the courthouse, and half of Mashburn along with it, should it ever fall. But since the boulder had been chained to the mountain ever since its discovery, most of the townspeople felt it was secure for at least another century or so. And since it was the feeling of the Daughters of World War II Society's local chapter that the building housed much too much history to be destroyed, it was decided that the courthouse should be preserved at all costs. So, the courthouse was revamped right where it stood.

If you turn left at the courthouse and head straight for the river's bank, you can cross the French Broad on a bridge that was constructed about 1920 to link Mashburn conveniently to whatever was on the other side of the river. Or rather, to link all those people across the river to their county seat. And, if you turn right half-way across the bridge, you can take a smaller bridge to an island that surfaced in the 50's when a big paper mill in Asheville dammed up the river. Elated that the small town of Mashburn (which, heretofore, had no place to expand) had suddenly grown by one island, the townsfolk got together and decided it would be an excellent location for a new elementary school. And so it was that the town of Mashburn built a new school there in the middle of the French Broad. John Shelton, a retired railroad man in Mashburn who now spends his days on the bench in front of the courthouse, loves to recall the story of a whole vanload of boys hat came through town one day looking for the new school. They stopped in front of the courthouse and asked John for directions. He says he told the driver all he had to do was go half-way across the bridge and turn right. The driver, not knowing there was another connecting bridge to an island, thought he was being told to go jump, and John says he took off mad. John found out later that man was a coach and the vanload of boys the opposing team. They stayed lost all afternoon and had to forfeit the game for not showing up. John's been laughing about it ever since.

There are two flower shops in Mashburn, three gas stations, a police station, a jail, a post office, a beauty parlor (known to all as The Beauty

Shop) a barber's shop (known to all as Sam's) and on one end of the street, Mr. Glen Cody managed to squeeze in a car dealership between Main Street and the river's edge. There's not much else there. The reason is, it's really not a very good place for a town. Sort of doomed at the outset, Mashburn only had so far it could go until it ran into the river or the mountain, or the two winding sections of road that lead out of either end of town. Nobody planned for Mashburn to be there, anyway. It was just that in the railroad days, Mashburn was a stop. And between it's access to the train, and the river coming down from Asheville, Mashburn was a life-line for the county.

But then the trains were obsolete and when the four-lane highway went through Beech Town, instead, Mashburn was just stuck. Wedged down in there between the bank of the mountain and the river, they don't even have anywhere to go now when the river rises. The whole town floods. And when the water goes down, the streets are full of trash from Asheville. so, while the river comes up and rusts the railroad tracks that wind through Mashburn, everybody in town just stays put. It's like they're waiting on something. Or somebody to come pry the town out of its miserable hole. Like the ladies at The Beauty Shop, waiting for something juicy to happen that they can discuss over their hairdryer noises. Like John in front of the courthouse, waiting for another vanload of boys to come through town. It's hard to say what it is that the people of Mashburn are waiting on. Maybe another train to come down those rusty tracks and give the town a reason again. Or, maybe, they're waiting for that boulder to fall on the courthouse.

the circus-garden temptation

Adumb's going to juggle some apples
doo da doo da
Adumb's going to juggle some apples
doo da doo da
When Adumb goes to juggle some apples
His inspiration will undo your shackles
And you will all know where you stand,
In relation to others in this grand plan.
O doo da day

Easy Evesky will assist him well
haha haha
Easy Evesky will assist him well
haha haha
(When Easy Evesky assists him, well
It's time they all go to hell;
Her hunger among them grows unequalled,
Eat an apple and damn the people!)
ho haha hay!

Oh Easy Evesky,
Oh Easy Evesky:
I know when you will be weeping
I know when your wake will be
I know when you will be good or bad
(So be bad for badness' sake!)
Satanic laws are coming to town

Keep them apples jugglin', Adumb-O!
now all can see
what you do with three
Adumb! O!
Keep them apples jugglin', Adumb-O!
try one more
that makes four
Adumb! Oh? (!)
you've dropped one
that you can do three
really amazes me
assistant, pick up
number four
from the floor
eat it Evesky
quick, it's easy
(Satanic law)
with all her might
after taking a bite
but before swallowing a trace
eve spits the chunk
smack in the middle
of satan's face
hail all
for the
savior of

******* ERRATUM *******

The poem "Circus-Garden Temptation," which appears on page 22, was written by David Martino, not John Bailey. The Student apologizes for this error.

Keep them apples jugglin', Adumb-O!
now all can see
what you do with three
Adumb! O!
Keep them apples jugglin', Adumb-O!
try one more
that makes four
Adumb! Oh? (!)
you've dropped one
that you can do three
really amazes me
assistant, pick up
number four
from the floor
eat it Evesky
quick, it's easy
(Satanic law)
with all her might
after taking a bite
but before swallowing a trace
eve spits the chunk
smack in the middle
of satan's face
hail all
for the
savior of
the
hu-
man
race

John Bailey

Alone…with Green Beans

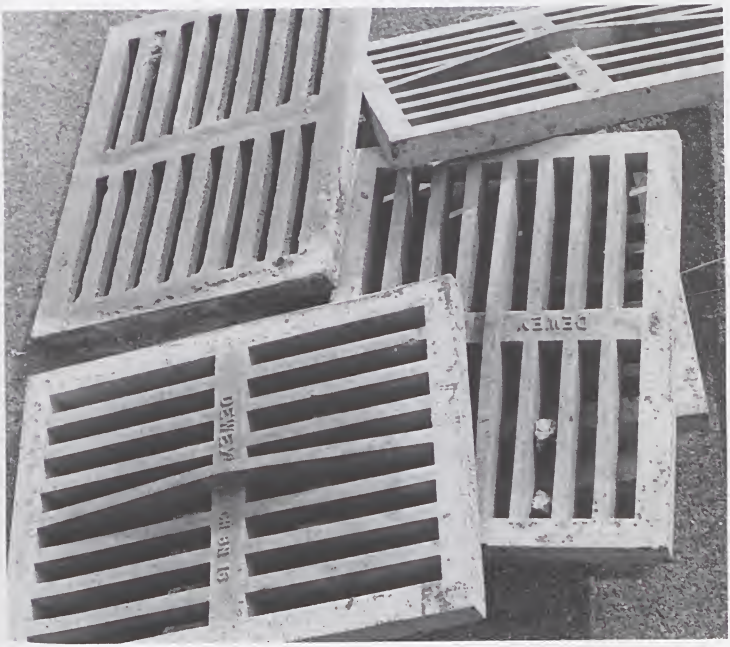
My stomach is hollow.
Both parents in the Virgin Islands for two weeks.
alone…
With my grandparents and brothers
at the dinner table.
Blonde curls shine up at the elderly
as a plate is pushed in front of me…
I have no power to stop the clattering of pans.
Salmon croquets sizzling,
fried okra pours into heaps on my plate, next to
boiled cabbage, a cooked green, dripping.
Brussel sprouts simmering,
turnip greens wilting,
green beans oozing with animal fat

and no cheeseburger.

The phone rings.
My sprite hops amid frozen glances.
A familiar voice, yet mutilated by the waves - Mama!
Nothing understood, only, "You don't have to eat the green beans."
The fortress of my loneliness, these words.
Incredulous glances.

Alone…with green beans.

David McMahon


DENEN

Song to the Weary

I

With cold steel tons of poles
Of fertility lying flaccid,
Underground and burning as acid
To rape the clouds off earth and skin souls,
The drab olive gods of brass
Can show old God that he was weak,
Being able to uncreate with mere leaks
In machines in time to make early mass.

II

With cool green screens of brains
Which give up purpose, food, and oracle,
By simply pressing keys of miracle
(Not having to hear Plato or fast in rain),
The soul need drip nor cry no more,
Being boxed beside clocks
And cheap small adding machines which mock
Beautiful progress of answers by the score.

III

In hard rough stone our churches and Book
Are mortared and bound with synthetic brown.
Not pulsing blood that drips from cracks and nooks;
White warm liquid replaced by water coolers of iron.
The pastor has a choice of audience on Sabbath,
Either pews or graves beside, which is which
No one decides or asks;
Where one feels no itch
Why apply balm?
Just croak a psalm.

IV

Poets and prophets drowned by pulsing
Throbs of power and drum sticks spewing
From black leathered satyrs appearing
In sun and moon, pervading as gods,
Who write hymns as thin as glass
Shattering and slicing the muses.

V

Musings from the mind and bleeding pen
Unheard.

VI

"At least T.S. had rain
In his sad vocab.
We have icy insane
And Tireless in lab.
Will the world end,
Or is it too tired, babe."

Eric Wilson

Souvenirs

My mind sometimes wanders
to a sleepy old Manse by the Bay.
There I rest,
in the simple memories of my youth.
My thoughts gently wade
into the warmth of the springtime tide.
I yearn,
... to chase the minnows along the shore,
... to follow the silvery pace of the periwinkles
among the windblown reeds,
... and to feel small at the sight of the great blue
in morning flight above the mist.
As the wet sand
stirs and settles between my toes,
Small souvenirs of time,
held closely and polished with care,
Stir and settle in my mind ...

Clark Duncan

Overview

Old man sits
Alone, on a bleached rock
With his scattered thoughts
Fleeing his mind in search of greener pastures.
The sea moves
Calming the kaleidoscope in his head
Rhythmic tide at his feet
A tired hawk
His eyes scan the sky in search of
Release.
But the clouds offer no answers
And no promises
To end his autobiography.
he is not done;
For the last threads must be woven
The tapestry must be completed
No, it is not yet time
The sea has answered his plea
In its silent blur of motion
Pinecones crackle as he stands
(No, that's just his joints)
And turns his back on the answer
To go in search of the question.

His footprints linger
Etched in the land
Until the sea claims them also
Leaving only
Smooth sand.

Penn Perry

The Fuckers' Island Gang

It was a hot Monday at the beginning of the summer, and school had just ended for the year. A thirteen-year old wearing blue jeans and no shirt leaned against the ice machine in front of the tackle shop, smoking a cigarette. He stared at the road, watching the heat rise from the ground. Another boy, wearing shorts and a tee-shirt, walked up to the ice machine, his hands in his pockets.

"Hey, Mark, what's up?" he asked.

"Shit," replied Mark.

The boy in shorts, whose name was Matt, leaned against the ice machine beside Mark, staring at the road.

"Sure is hot," he said.

"Hot is hot," Mark replied. He threw his cigarette into the parking lot and said, "I'm going inside."

Matt followed Mark into the tackle shop. At the back of the shop was a man wearing khaki shorts and a plaid sport shirt. He was standing at the counter, asking the store manager about different kinds of bait. The manager, a white-haired, fat man, looked up briefly and frowned as the boys walked in, then returned to his customer.

There was a gum ball machine near the door that took dimes for big purple gum balls.

"Hey Matt," Mark asked. "Do you have a dime?"

"Nope."

"Shit," Mark concluded, and he walked through the aisles of the store. In addition to bait and fishing tackle, the store sold miscellaneous junk at prices aimed at people coming from the cities for weekend fishing trips. Matt followed Mark through the store until Mark stopped in front of some hardware.

"Look at that," Mark said, pointing to a blowtorch kit which contained the torch, a can of propane, and a flint lighter.

"So?' asked Matt.

"Here, put it in your shirt," Mark whispered, stuffing the metal box under Matt's tee shirt.

"No! He'll see it!" Matt protested.

"No he won't," Mark whispered. "Just walk out, and keep your back to the guy the whole time. He won't see anything."

"Why do you want this thing, anyway?" Matt asked.

"Just take it. I'll tell you when we get out."

The two boys walked out of the store. The manager looked up as the door

opened, but he didn't see the torch kit. Matt hid behind the ice machine, while Mark went back to the door. Matt heard a loud clank of metal and the store manager shouted "Hey, you!' and Mark ran around the ice machine with the purple gum ball machine under his arm.

"Come on!" he shouted as he ran by, and Mark followed him, running as fast as he could. They ran behind the store, down a hill and into the woods at the bottom, where they stopped and looked back. The store manager was standing by the corner of the store, looking down the hill. He shook his head and went back into the store.

After he had caught his breath, Matt asked, "Man! How did you get that thing?"

"I just reached in and grabbed it," Mark said. "Give me that torch."

"Do you know how to work it?" Matt asked, handing the torch kit to Mark.

"Yeah," Mark answered. "My dad's got one." Mark screwed the propane can onto the torch, opened the valve, and lit it with the flint sparker. With a low "whif" a blue flame shot out of the torch. The two boys stared at it for a few seconds and then Mark turned the flame on the gum ball machine, aiming at the plastic dome which held the gum balls. After several seconds the plastic began to melt, and after a minute there was a three inch hole in the dome. Mark closed the valve of the torch and dumped the purple gum balls out of the machine onto the ground.

The two boys each stuffed their mouths full of gum balls, and Matt filled his pockets.

Mark got up and said through his mouthful of gum, "Let's get the fuck out of here."

"All right," Matt said, and got up, but then he turned back and picked up the blowtorch. "This thing is neat," he said.

The two boys walked through the woods until they arrived in the back yard of a small wooden house. Five other boys were in the yard, throwing rocks at each other. When they saw Mark and Matt, they crowded around to see the loot from the tackle shop. They listened to the story and begged Matt for some of the gum he had in his pocket.

"You dumbass," said one of the boys. "You should have torched the money box and gotten all the dimes."

"Shut up, Randy," said Mark, "or I'll torch your fucking head!"

"Bullshit!" said Randy.

Mark looked at Randy, who was laughing. "Give me the torch, Matt," he

said. Matt gave him the torch, and Mark held it out to him. "Light it."

Matt glanced at Randy, then at Mark. He opened the valve on the torch and then lit it with the sparker. Mark waved the torch in front of Randy. The blue flame came within a foot of Randy's face.

"Shit, Mark," Randy said, backing away. "All right. Don't do it."

"Who's the baddest mother fucker here?" Mark asked.

"You are, Mark," Randy said.

"Say it!" Mark demanded.

"You're the baddest mother fucker, Mark. Don't torch my head," he pleaded.

"I'm not going to torch your fucking head," Mark said, turning off the torch. "But I will," he warned.

"All right," Randy said.

The other boys, who had become silent when Matt had lit the torch, began to talk again now. They laughed at Randy and at the blowtorch and the gum balls.

Mark gave the torch back to Matt. Matt grinned briefly at Mark and then looked away.

On Tuesday, all seven of the boys went to Eddie's house on the river and rode around in Eddie's father's motorboat. Eddie was driving, and they went up and down the river, a mile in each direction, which was as far as Eddie was allowed to take the boat. After a couple of hours of this, as they reached a mile down river from Eddie's house and Eddie began to turn the boat around, Mark called from his seat in the front of the boat, "Hey, Eddie, keep going."

"I can't," Eddie replied. "Look at this!" Eddie turned the boat sharply to the left, causing it to lean far to the left and send up a wall of spray on the right.

"Come on, Eddie," Mark said. "I'm tired of going up and down this fucking river. Let's go see what's down there."

"My parents won't let me," Eddie said, looking past Mark to the water in front of the boat.

"Fuck your parents! They won't know," Mark said.

"Yeah, come on, Eddie," said Randy. "I'm sick and damn tired of the two miles in front of your house."

When the other boys began to chime in, Eddie gave in and turned the boat around. Someone yelled "Yeeehaaa!" as they passed the one-mile mark into forbidden territory. The other boys cheered, "Hell, yeah!" and "Fuck parents!"

Past the one mile mark, the river began to turn away from town and waterfront houses like the ones around Eddie's house became less frequent,

while the forest through which the river ran became thicker. After a mile they passed a red, wooden dock with a set of stairs that led to a small brown house, and after that they didn't see anymore houses.

Two miles past the red dock, Mark pointed ahead and said, "Look!" The river parted and flowed past the two sides of a small island.

"Land there!" Mark shouted.

Eddie passed the rocky tip of the island and turned in toward the island's right side. The boat bumped against the ground and all the boys except Eddie jumped out of the boat and splashed ashore.

"Come on, Eddie," shouted Bill, who was completely wet.

"Tie the boat down first," Eddie shouted, and he threw a rope. Bill picked up the rope from the water where it fell and tied it to a tree branch that hung over the water. Eddie jumped out of the boat and waded to the island.

The island was only about twenty feet wide and forty feet long. It was thickly covered with small trees except for a clearing ten feet in diameter in the middle. The boys climbed up the steep shore and sat in this clearing. The muddy ashes of an old campfire were piled in the center of the clearing ten feet in diameter in the middle. The boys climbed up the steep shore and sat in this clearing. The muddy ashes of an old campfire were piled in the center of the clearing, and blackened cans and other trash were scattered on the ground.

"This place is neat!" shouted Bill.

"Fuck yeah!" shouted John.

"It's like a hideaway," Scott said, and then added, "a fuckin' hideaway."

Matt said, "Let's make a gang! This can be our hideout. What do you think, Mark?"

Mark, who was trying to light a wet cigarette with a Bic lighter, said, "Yeah, sure."

"All right," said Randy. "Let's do it!"

The other boys added their approval, adding the appropriate expletives whenever necessary.

After a while, Randy said, "We gotta elect a president. Everyone vote for me!"

Matt said, "How about Mark? Let him be president."

Mark, who had finally lit his cigarette, said, "Yeah. I'll do it."

Randy called for a vote and everyone but him voted for Mark. They let Randy be vice president.

"First of all," Mark said, "we've got to name this island."

"Let's call it Mark and Randy Island, 'cause we're the presidents," Randy

said.

"No way, shithead," replied John. "Let's call it Devil's Island."

"That's stupid," said Bill. "Think of something new."

"Fucker," said Mark. "That's new."

"Yeah!" said John. "Fuckers' Island!"

The boys all laughed and John began to chant, "Fuckers' Island—Fuckers' Island." Randy and Scott joined in, but then Mark interrupted them.

"Shut up! You want someone to hear us?"

"There's no one out here to hear us," said John.

"You shut the fuck up," said Mark. "I'm the boss." John and the others were quiet.

"From now on, this is Fuckers' Island and we're the Fuckers' Island Gang."

Some of the boys cheered "yeah!" and "all right" and "Fuckers' Island Gang!"

"Hey, guys?" Eddie said, trying to get the boys' attention. "Hey! we need to get back soon. My mom's gonna wonder where's the boat."

"Fuck your mom," John said.

"Come on, guys, I'm leaving," Eddie said, getting up.

"All right, we'll go now,' Mark said, "but we're coming back tomorrow and everyone has to bring a sixpack or you're out of the gang."

"Beer?" Scott asked.

"No, baby food," Mark said. "Of course beer! Everyone bring a sixpack."

The boys talked excitedly as they all got back into the boat.

Matt didn't know where he could get a sixpack of beer, so Mark got one for him. He took them from his father's supply in the basement of his house.

The boys all met at Eddie's house on Wednesday and took the boat to the island. Besides Mark and Matt, only Bill had brought beer, so the seven of them had three sixpacks. Mark opened the first one in the boat on the way and drank it down. He threw the empty can at the red dock as they passed it.

When they arrived at the island, they sat in the clearing, with the beer piled at the center. Matt didn't take any beer, but he watched the others. Mark had three beers in addition to the one he had had in the boat. Bill drank one and opened another one but didn't ever finish it. John had one and then said he didn't want any more. Randy drank one, but he spilt more on himself than he swallowed. Eddie drank part of one beer and then said he had to go check the

boat and he went down to the water. Scott took a big sip and then spit it all out, to the amusement of the rest of the gang.

Randy asked Matt, "Why don't you drink one? Are you scared?"

"At least I brought some. You guys are going to get kicked out for not bringing any," Matt said, glancing at Mark.

Randy looked over to where Mark had been sitting. Mark leaned against a tree, fast asleep, his three beer cans lined up at his feet. Randy walked over and kicked Mark's cans over. "Let him try and kick us out,' he said quietly to Matt. "We'll beat his ass. And we'll beat yours too if you tell him.' He turned to John and Scott and said, "Right, guys?"

"Yeah," John said. 'No one's kicking me out."

"Fuck yeah," said Scott, almost in a whisper, glancing at mark, who still slept.

Matt remained silent until about three o' clock when he heard Eddie start the boat. He woke Mark up and they all got back into the boat and went home.

The Fuckers' Island Gang didn't meet on Thursday until seven o' clock that night when they all met at Eddie's house and sneaked the boat away by paddling it out into the river before they started the motor. It was getting dark when they passed the red dock, and by the time they reached the island, they had to use the flashlight that Randy had brought to find the beer they had left the night before. The beer was warm, though, and nobody wanted any.

They sat around the little clearing, talking and laughing.

"Let's build a fire," Randy suggested. "Have you got your lighter, Mark?"

"Yeah, let's build a fire!" shouted Eddie.

They turned to Mark for the lighter, but Mark didn't move. "We're not going to make a fire," he said.

"Why not?" asked Randy.

"Because someone might see it," Mark said. "Besides, you dumbasses would probably burn the whole damn island down."

"No, we wouldn't!" said Eddie.

"No one can see us," said Randy. "Why can't we build a fire?'

"We're not going to make a fucking fire because I say so and I'm the president," Mark replied, standing up.

Randy stood up and faced Mark. "You don't let us do anything! What are we supposed to do, sit around here all the time and fuck off?"

"You can," Mark said, "but I'm going on a raid."

"A raid?" asked Bill.

"Yeah," Mark said. "Everyone get in the boat. We're going to go raid someone and kick some ass."

The boys all ran down to the boat yelling "Kick some ass!" and "Hell, yeah!" and "Fuckers' Island Gang!"

Eddie drove the boat upstream until they came to the red dock. "Stop here," whispered Mark. "Everyone be quiet."

Eddie cut the engine and steered the boat toward the dock. It ran out of momentum ten feet from the red dock, so Bill jumped into the water and swam to the dock with a rope. He climbed onto the dock and pulled with the rope while John and Matt paddled the boat in. The boat bumped into the dock next to a small outboard motorboat that was tied to the dock. The boys climbed onto the dock and walked to the stairway that led up to the house.

"I'll go in front 'cause I got the flashlight," whispered Randy.

"No way," whispered Mark. "Don't turn that thing on. They'll see it."

Randy muttered under his breath as he put the flashlight in his pocket.

Matt whispered to Mark, "I'll stay here in case something happens."

Mark looked at him, thinking, and then whispered, "Ok. Eddie, give him the key.'

Eddie whispered, "It's in the boat. But don't start it unless you have to, and I'll drive.'

Matt watched as the boys went up the stairs. At the top, they paused, and then Mark pointed to a wooden shed that stood to the right of the stairs. The six boys ran across the yard to the shed and disappeared behind it. After a minute Matt saw a light coming from behind the shed and then the boys began to run back down the stairs.

Eddie ran by and jumped into the boat. He was followed by Randy, Bill, and Scott, and then John came up last. Mark did not come. Matt looked up at the hose where lights were beginning to appear in the windows. He could barely make out Mark crouched below one of the windows. He could see flames coming from behind the shed and then Mark was running for the stairs. A man appeared in the doorway of the house and shouted, "Hey, you!"

"Come on, Matt, let's go!" shouted Randy from the he boat. The boat was already pulling away from the dock.

"But Mark's up there!" shouted Matt, pointing up the stairs.

"Let's get out of here or we'll all get caught!" said Randy, and the boat sped away from the dock. Mark ran onto the dock and stopped. "You guys ran before we did the house!" He said, but then he saw that the boat was gone.

"They left us," said Matt.

"Get in that other boat," Mark said, as he jumped into the outboard motorboat. Matt got in and untied the ropes while Mark pulled the starting cable on the motor. As they pulled away from the dock they saw the man from the house running toward the shed, which was now completely aflame.

Mark drove the boat back to the island, where they met the other boys.

"Why the fuck did you leave us?" Mark screamed at Eddie.

"We were all going to get caught," said Randy, who stood next to Eddie. "Besides, you got away."

Mark turned to Randy and stuck his finger in Randy's face. "The next time someone leaves someone else, they're out of the gang!"

"All right," Randy said.

Mark sat in the clearing with his arms crossed, cursing under his breath, while the other boys tied the outboard motor boat to the island and covered it with branches so that it would not be found. "When this was done, they all piled into Eddie's boat and went home. Mark sat in the front of the boat and didn't speak to anyone on the trip back.

On Friday afternoon the boys went to the island and raced the boats up and down the river, alongside the island. They found that Eddie's boat was much faster than the one Mark had taken from the red dock. After a couple of races, Mark got tired of losing, so he tied his boat to the island and went to sleep.

Matt watched from Mark's boat as the other five boys tired of riding in circles around the island and began to fish with poles they had brought from Eddie's house. When they had caught four or five fish, they got out of the boat and went up to the clearing. They huddled around in a circle on the ground and soon Matt saw smoke rising from their midst. Matt shook Mark awake and pointed to the fire. Mark jumped out of the boat and Matt followed him up to the clearing. Mark stomped out the fire and shouted, "I said 'No fires,' God damn it!"

Randy stood up and screamed in Mark's face, "Fuck you!"

Mark looked at Randy for a few seconds and then he drew back his right arm and punched Randy in the nose. Randy fell backwards onto the ground. His nose was bleeding. Mark looked around at the other boys.

"But we're hungry," said Scott.

"Yeah, what are we going to eat," asked Bill. "We can't eat those fish raw."

"I'll tell you what we're going to do," said Mark. "We'll wait 'till dark,

and then we'll go break in at the grocery store and we can get all the food we want."

"Yeah," whispered John. "We'll steal it."

"Just like Mark's boat," whispered Scott.

Randy sat up and wiped his nose on his shirt. Mark glanced at him and then went back to his boat.

The boys sat around the island while it got dark, whispering, as if someone might hear their plans, even though the nearest house was the one with the red dock, two miles away.

At nine o' clock, which was when the grocery store closed, the Fuckers' Island Gang piled into the boats and headed upriver. Mark and Matt led the way in Mark's boat, and Eddie and the others followed. They passed the red dock, being careful to pass on the far side of the river. They passed the one mile mark, and finally landed near Eddie's house, but on the other side of the river. They slipped out of their boats and climbed up the shore and crept through the woods until they reached the road. One hundred feet down the road from the spot where they emerged lay Finn's Grocery Store. It was a small building with a glass front, dimly lit by a single light bulb from behind the counter, left on to scare burglars away. Mark led the gang down the street to the store and crouched in front of the door. It was locked with a dead bolt.

"Randy, give me hour flashlight," Mark whispered.

"What for?" asked Randy.

"Just give me the God damn flashlight!"

Randy offered it up, and Mark took it and slammed it into the glass door. The door shattered loudly and bits of glass fell to the ground inside and outside the store. Mark reached through the hole, found the latch, and unbolted the door.

The boys ran in and began filling their pockets with candy, cookies, potato chips, comic books, and cellophane-wrapped cupcakes. What they didn't want or couldn't fit in their pockets, they threw on the floor.

Randy ran behind the counter and pulled the cash register drawer. It wouldn't open, so he began pulling everything off of the shelves beneath the counter and throwing it on the floor.

"Hey! Look at this!" he shouted suddenly, and held up a .22 caliber pistol.

The boys all looked up and Mark ran to the counter. "Give me that!" he said, reaching for the gun.

"No!" Randy shouted. "You get the boat and I get the gun!"

Mark was about to say something when Randy looked behind Mark, gasped, and then ducked behind the counter. Mark turned around and saw a light

at the door. As the boys stood frozen, a policemen with a flashlight appeared in the doorway.

"Hey, you—" he began, and then there was a deafening noise and the policeman fell to the ground. The boys turned to look at Randy, who was holding the smoking gun.

"Let's get out of here!" he shouted, and he ran through the door. The other boys followed. Matt stopped and stared at the policeman, who was lying on the floor, holding his leg.

Mark pulled on his arm and said, "Come on!" Matt turned and ran out of the store and followed the other boys to the river.

Mark and Matt followed the other boat back to the island. When they got there, the other boys were yelling and laughing and eating the food they had escaped with.

From around a mouthful of Twinkies, John said, "Man, Randy, I think you blew his fucking head off!"

"Yeah," said Scott. "We won't have to worry about him no more. You're a real cop-killer."

Randy stood smiling, with the gun stuck in the waist of his shorts.

Mark walked to him and said, 'You're going to get us all in deep shit."

Randy smiled at him and said, "Fuck off."

"Yeah," John said, "Leave him alone. He's a killer now."

"He didn't kill nobody," said Mark, but no one but Matt heard him. The other boys were crowding around while Randy showed them the gun. Matt and Mark sat in Mark's boat. Matt read a comic book that Mark had taken and Mark closed his eyes and pretended to be asleep.

After an hour, Bill looked at his watch and said, "Hey, everyone, it's midnight!"

The boys on the island all cheered, and Randy said, "It's Saturday now! Let's build a fire and celebrate!"

The boys built a fire an Randy lit it with a match from his pocket. When he saw the fire, Mark climbed up to the clearing.

"Put that fire out or you'll burn down the whole island,' he said.

Randy stood with his hands on his hips, the gun sticking out of his waist. "Fuck you," he said.

"Go to hell, Randy," Mark replied.

Randy pulled the gun out of his shorts and pointed it at Mark. "Get out of here," he said. 'Get the fuck off of this island or I'll blow your brains out."

Mark stared at Randy for several seconds, not moving. Randy pulled the

hammer back and slowly cocked the gun. Mark looked at the gun and then turned around. He climbed down the shore to his boat. As he got into the boat, Matt started the engine and pulled the boat away from the island. "I should have torched you while I had the chance," Mark called.

"Fuck you!" Randy replied.

Matt drove the boat back up the river. When they were about three hundred yards from the island, they heard a gunshot. They turned and looked back at the island. A large fire lit the whole island, and they could see boys dancing around the fire. They heard another shot. Matt turned around and stared at the river in front of him.

On Sunday morning Mark came to Matt's house, and they talked in the back yard.

"Have you been to the island?" Mark asked.

"Not since we left," answered Matt.

"Well, they burnt it up," Mark said. "Just like I told them."

"I guess you were right."

"You know what we ought to do?" asked Mark. "We ought to find us another island and make a new gang. We can teach Randy and them a lesson. I've got that boat. I hid it in the woods. You want to go get it?'

"I can't," Matt said.

"Why not?'

"I'm going to church with my mom," Matt said.

"Why are you going to church? Don't you want to be in a gang?"

"My mom wants me to go. She says I need it."

"What about after church?" Mark asked.

"I don't know," Matt said. "I don't really want to be in a gang again."

Mark stared at his feet for a while. Finally, he said, "Yeah, I guess you're right."

Unfathomability

A marble of stone and water and life
Suspended in the realm of its Maker's eye-
Veined in indigo,
Stained in sapphire,
Mottled with azure of the sky
Surrounding it. It pulses from its depths with fire,
Heaving its lava,
Steaming with springs.
It cups towns in the palm of its valleys,
it kills ships with its oceans' knives,
It protects 'neath its forests' wings,
It lifts man up on its mountains' shoulders.
It is power. It is mystery.

She set after a fine line, opaquely lucid,
Looking for that which was not where she was.
She followed the North Star until she was south,
In search of an infound discovery -
A white-capped, rocked-edged pyramid,
Supple foamed streams from a high, stony mouth,
Sandy basins of lapis lazuli,
A dry, golden vastness of velvety hills.
She frantically ran, chasing her dream
With the speed of a comet, with maddened thrill,
Reaching for the azimuth, she grasped it in her hand
And it slipped through her fingers like an hourglass' sand.

As you sit in the sun, your blood running thick,
You feel life around you surround you,
Compound you with the Tao of the Cosmos.
Your presence was conceived at the Earth's conception,
Constellated in the Race to come.
Your flesh is clay; your soul overflows
With the gurgling waters of all oceans blue.
Although today may be a deception,
You have always been here, and you always will be;
You are Eternal. You have become
One with the Heavens,
One with the Earth,
One with him who delivered your birth.

I lie 'neath the view of a million stars;
They are minute specks of glory,
Each vying for my breathless wonder.
Trillions of miles are spread between us,
Between me and each flaming sphere of gas,
Each many times wider and many times denser
Than this planet of ours.
To them , I am nothing.

In an infinite universe,
In a fire-filled galaxy,
In a vertiginous solar system,
On a populus planet,
On a vast continent,
In a thriving country,
In a growing state,
In a busy city,
On a peaceful neighborhood,
On a green lawn,
On a gingham blanket,
I am a minute speck of
Insignificance.

Katy Pugh

INTERSTATE
95

Breathing Lessons
Anne Tyler
Alfred A. Knopf 1988
$18.95

Anne Tyler's most recent novel, *Breathing Lessons*, explores what the jacket describes as "all there is to know about a marriage." Maggie and Ira, whose marriage is the focus of the novel, demonstrate the forces which continue to shape long-term relationships: other infatuations, children, parents, unrealized goals, and, primarily, misconceptions and misunderstandings. Underlying this seemingly sentimental endeavor, however, is the articulation of another idea - the fictive nature of control and our acceptance of it as truth. Maggie is the impetuous, haphazard, sentimental 48-year old woman through whose perception Tyler frames much of the novel. As an aging wife and mother of children who she feels "no longer had any need of her," she searches for some semblance of control. Maggie convinces herself that her situation has been her own doing: "If she was easily swayed, at least she had chosen who would sway her. If she was locked in a pattern, at least she had chosen what that pattern would be. She felt strong and free and definite." She also exhibits this tendency towards control in her perception of reality. As Ira, her husband, describes it, "It was amazing .... how people fooled themselves into believing what they wanted to. (How Maggie fooled herself, he meant)." Maggie twists reality into what she wants it to be not only in her infatuation with Mr. Gabriel and in her understanding of Ira's reactions to her but especially in the relationship between Jesse and Fiona. Her meddling demonstrates not only Maggie's belief that she knows what's best for Jesse and Fiona, but a deeper conviction that through her they can break out of the cycle of misunderstanding that constitutes their relationship. This is poignantly ironic because Maggie only partially realizes and cannot even attempt to remove the misunderstandings in her own marriage. The characters are trapped like rats in mazes, confined to the same roles and routines. Nothing in *Breathing Lessons* suggests that these relationships could have been otherwise. Rather, a sense of the heaviness of the uncontrollable, inescapable nature of fate permeates the novel.

My main criticism of this novel is its helpless acceptance of what it

describes as the hopelessly contorted nature of human relationships. The marital relationship, exemplified primarily through Maggie and Ira, but also mirrored in Mr. Otis and Duluth and in Jesse and Fiona, is portrayed as a relation based on repeated roles in repeated scenarios which involve the same actions and reactions, endlessly reenacted. Many of these situations are the product of some misunderstanding which the characters, too trapped in the contingency of their situation, are unable to grasp. *Breathing Lessons*'s assessment of the situation reeks complacency and leaves the reader with the sense that all relationships are inevitably doomed to misunderstanding, offering only the condolence that "everything - and nothing - changes." In this way, the book fails to achieve what it could have been - an instrument of change. Tyler skillfully illustrates the fictive nature of control, but does not pursue it far enough to suggest alternatives.

Review by Janet Ramey

Changing the Past

Thomas Berger

Little, Brown, & Company Limited 1989

$18.95

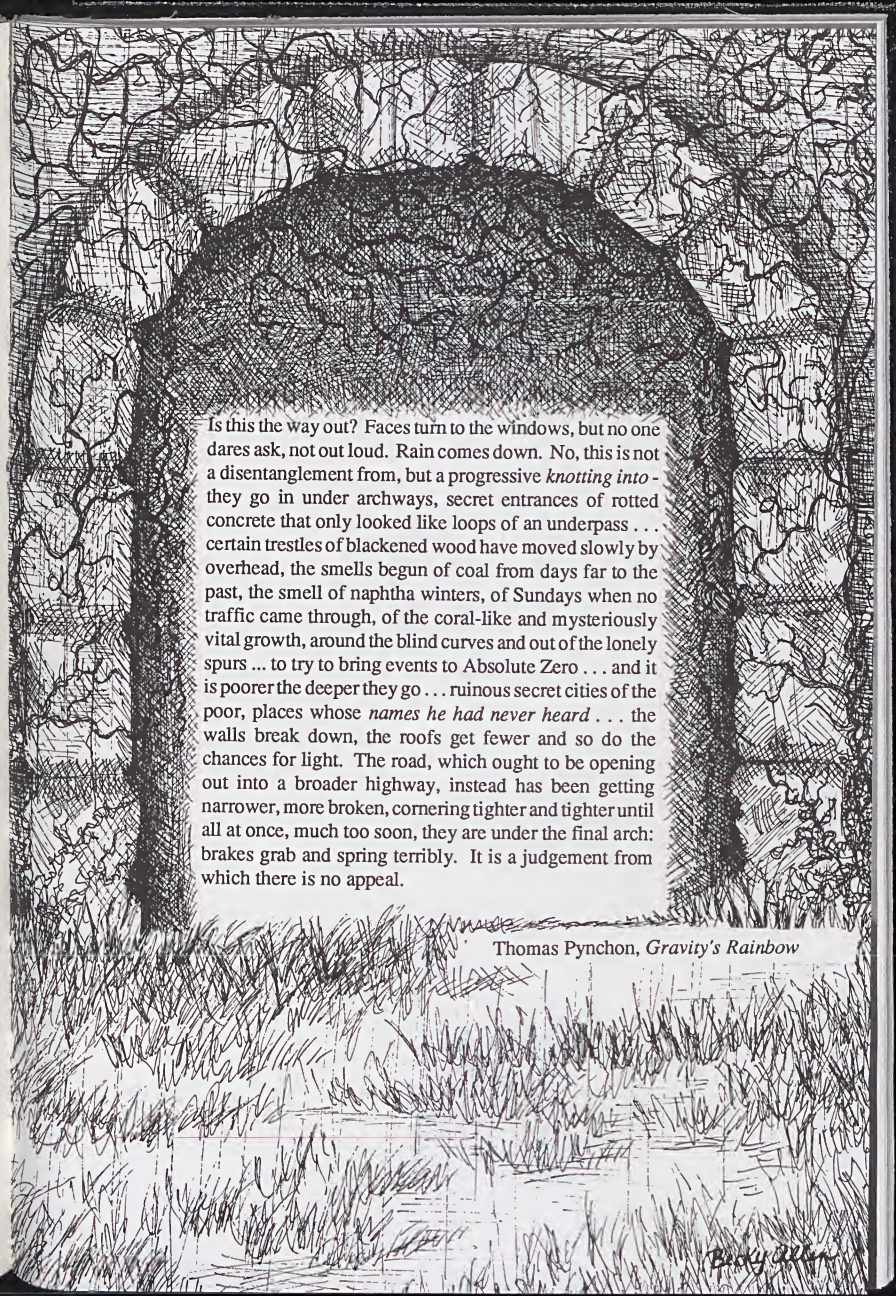
Changing the Past is the latest of sixteen novels by Thomas Berger. It explores the concept of an infinitely mutable, but not entirely controllable past. The main character, Walter Hunsicker, is given the opportunity to change his past and, if he is not happy with the results, to change it back again. Hunsicker, the chief copy-editor for a major publisher, has a rather conservative, undynamic personality. Though his life is not perfect, he is happily married and not dissatisfied with his career. Nevertheless, when he discovers his son has AIDS, he succumbs to his desire to answer the question posed on the books jacket, "What would my life have been like if...?" After changing his name to Jack Kellogg, Hunsicker pursues wealth and power as an urban slumlord. He is quickly disgusted with his lifestyle and values, so he returns

to try a different past. He next seeks fame by becoming Jackie Kellogg, an overweight comedian. Berger presents Jackie's career from a struggling start, to overwhelming popularity, to a decline brought about by his own vices, and to a present in which the aging star is totally alone. This life does not suit Hunsicker's taste either. Walter then attempts to attain artistic greatness as a writer. Once again he struggles through his early years, finally succeeds in publishing a best-seller, but has little further success. He despairs of this and tries one final past. This time he attempts to help his fellow man by becoming a radio psychologist. He is quite successful, and his national following even helps his wife become the first woman President. His record in giving advice is less than spotless, though, and this possible past ends when a disgruntled listener-turned-assassin shoots his wife at the inauguration. Hunsicker returns to the present for good this time, and the reader last sees him at home with his wife.

Throughout Hunsicker's chosen pasts, his professional success is juxtaposed by deficiencies in his personal life. The vices which so often are thought of in connection with "exotic" careers are treated extensively. The extreme stereotyping seems to make a statement in itself. But perhaps the strongest theme in the book is the unforseeable alterations to one's character brought about by pursuing vanity of any kind. Hunsicker is repulsed by his own nature in each of the alternative pasts he creates for himself. Only in his real life does he have a wife whom he truly loves. His relationships with women in his fabricated pasts are all superficial and unsatisfactory, as are most other aspects of these lives. By presenting only dissatisfaction when anything is possible, Berger offers a strong criticism of the values advocated by today's society and gives an alternative paradigm for assessing personal happiness.

Review by Stephen Dillingham

ICHTUNG



Is this the way out? Faces turn to the windows, but no one dares ask, not out loud. Rain comes down. No, this is not a disentanglement from, but a progressive *knotting into* - they go in under archways, secret entrances of rotted concrete that only looked like loops of an underpass . . . certain trestles of blackened wood have moved slowly by overhead, the smells begun of coal from days far to the past, the smell of naphtha winters, of Sundays when no traffic came through, of the coral-like and mysteriously vital growth, around the blind curves and out of the lonely spurs ... to try to bring events to Absolute Zero . . . and it is poorer the deeper they go . . . ruinous secret cities of the poor, places whose *names he had never heard* . . . the walls break down, the roofs get fewer and so do the chances for light. The road, which ought to be opening out into a broader highway, instead has been getting narrower, more broken, cornering tighter and tighter until all at once, much too soon, they are under the final arch: brakes grab and spring terribly. It is a judgement from which there is no appeal.

Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow*

The Student

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SPRING 1990

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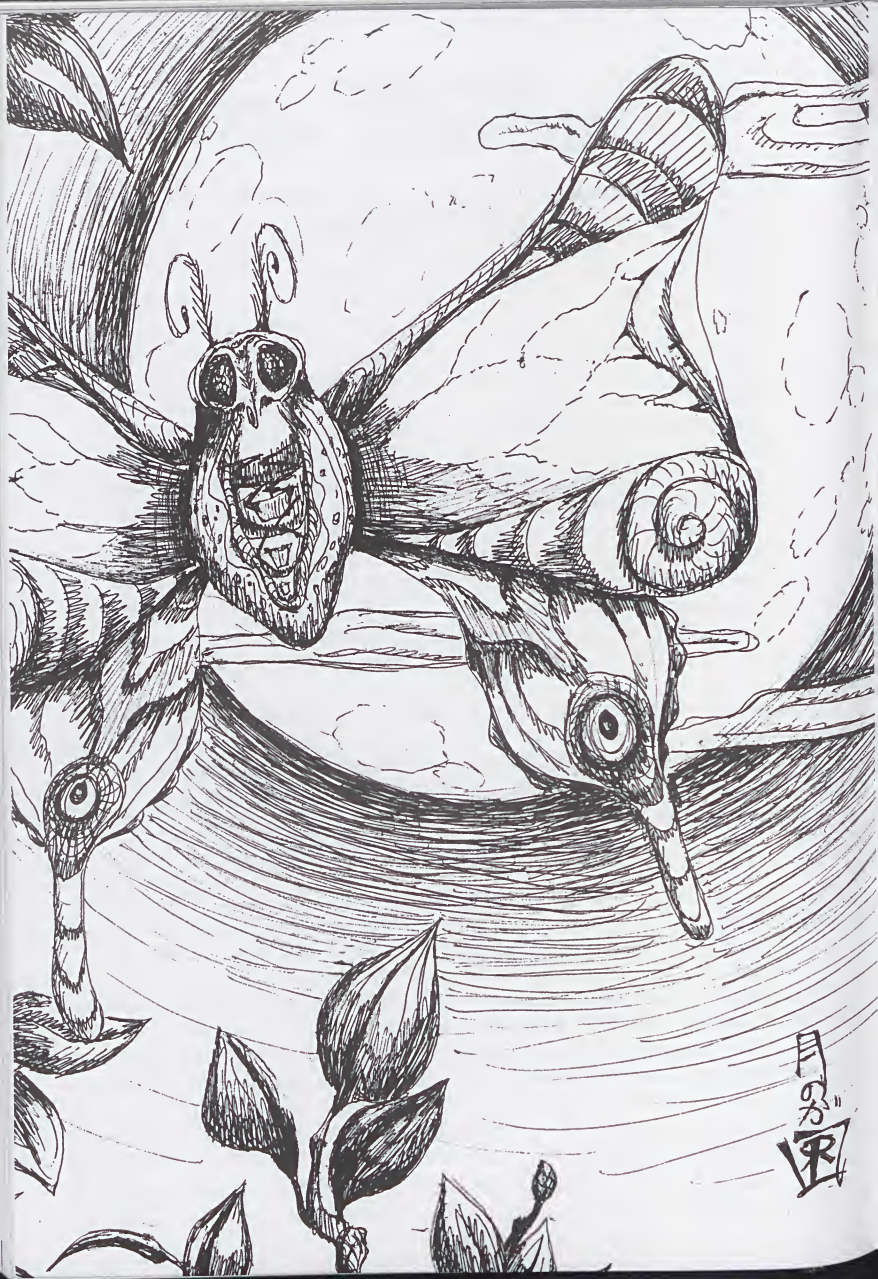


Cathy Eisenhower

Whitman's Hands

I saw you again this morning
blazing over the last hill,
your hands all raw, deep breath shaken,
your delicate filthy back
glistening with sweat and rain.
I can still hear
that giant horse scream
into darkness, the clear hoof-
claps, mad whoops of hand
against haunch, your skin rubbed hot
in rhythmic bursts, those thin
fingers fiercely gripping the mane,
your one free hand plunged
naked into wild air.

Territory

"The world is full of enemies.
There is no safe place."
—Anne Sexton

No enemies here, Anne.
No words lit with flame, no open palms.

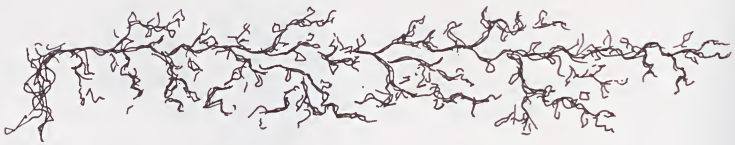
Just the wind
gathering in doorways

and all of
us— the curious birds
born from fog, circling in dark.

We rise over trees,
over a charred fat land
gone thin.

But even here, a hot roar
breathes above us; fragments
of pure light
lay shadows in the permanent distance.

We hover toward them,
the voices of the dead
strapped to our crooked backs.



Scott de Marchi

Diagnostics

I am sure that one day
a man will look at the straight, flat lines
of our roads
he will fill the hollow sewers with water, wash
the silt from their throats
just to ask them why our men and women
lost the urge to build and
slid like rain off the blacktop

when he goes home
he sees water stretching
the skin of his wife's breasts
and clouds falling from the television
his bookshelves twist into aquariums
as certain volumes dart electric
rippling like eels
he drinks

later he coughs wetly
rolls over onto his wife
and grunts repeatedly about primitives
their roads, sewers
each syllable rises to the attic
blinks in the dust

Blue Pearl

Thought once to be
wide,
flat,
Then round,
blue,
pearl from an Oyster-God.

Dingy,
Mangy,
worn out tatter of a paradisio
of a Jardin perfumada
with the blood sweat
trickling in the chase
for the peso diablo
the peso chingau.

Bought and sold
like so much plastic,
scarred by the axe
of the peso chingau;
singed by the flame
of the wrath of a nation;
stung by the fever of acid remains;
stripped by the hands
of the greedy green dollar;
stumped by the sins
who unheedingly follow
the scent of the ugly,
flat,
peso chingau.

William Doyle

Winter

Her eyes open as the lights come on; the tags on her collar jingle as she looks up, startled from a dream. The man comes in and says something as he walks to the door that opens onto the back yard. She watches as he pulls back the curtain and unlocks the door. He slides open the glass door and looks back at her. He says more words and claps his hands.

With a slight groan she stands up in her bed. Her skin hangs from her backbone loosely against her ribs. She steps out of the bed a bit too quickly and her foot slips, landing her nose on the floor. She struggles to get back on her feet, and then walks to the door, her toenails clicking on the linoleum. She stops at the doorway, and the man fastens a chain to her collar. She looks up at him, remembering a day when the chain pulled her collar tight and a squirrel got away. She hasn't seen a squirrel for a while.

A gentle nudge from the man's foot brings her back to the present. She steps into the doorway and looks down onto the patio. Somehow, she doesn't remember that step ever being so high. She lowers her body and carefully puts a foot on the patio. The patio is not as slick as the linoleum floor and this time she does not slip.

As she steps out onto the patio, the man closes the door behind her. She looks around. It is still dark. She sees someone moving in front of a lighted window in the next yard. A big dog runs back and forth within his little fenced-in yard. She hears no sounds.

Slowly she walks to the edge of the patio.

She wakes up again when the boy rubs her fur. He talks to her as he pets her and she closes her eyes approvingly. He still talks to her, and the words sound familiar, but she can't quite make out what he is saying. She thinks she remembers a time when she could understand what he said, and she talked to him, too, then.

He stops petting her and she opens her eyes. He is standing up looking down at her as she lies on the rug. He walks to the door and opens it and looks back at her. He says something, words. She rolls over onto her feet and stands up slowly, front legs first, then the back legs. She walks to the door and they go out together.

The boy walks down the sidewalk and looks back. She follows him, carefully selecting each step in order to cause the least pain to her sore legs. She follows the boy to the front of the house, where he sits down on the grass. She sits down, too, and looks around her. A breeze blows up the hill from the street, rippling across the grass and across the fur that hangs from her back. It is cold. Winter is coming.

She sees a little dog in the yard across the street. She hopes it won't come into her yard. She remembers a time when she would chase all the other dogs out of her yard. They would run off and she would let them go; she only wanted to scare them. She can still do it if she has to. If that dog comes in her yard, she'll protect

the boy.

A car passes on the street. She watches it carefully, following it with her eyes until it is halfway down the street. As long as it doesn't come too close, she'll let it go by. She remembers a time when she would bark at all the cars that went by. They knew not to come into this yard.

The boy stands up and speaks. She gets up to follow, but she takes one last look around. The wind is blowing again. Leaves are falling from the trees. The birds are flying away. Winter is coming.

Poem About War

It smells like a haberdashery!
Those green monuments! Those black men!
Hard eyes, crisp collars
The spears in the claws, the terrible beak
The flag, the shadows, the sky simmering like split peas.
It sounds like bones.
The columns, ancient writing like glyphs on icons
The dry leaves curled, the webs everywhere
The dark windows, distant steps
Let me fold them and put them in my wallet.

Belfry

Witness its epilepsy—
Particularly against Van Gogh's Starry Night:
That frenzy of black against black
In cyclones of blue,
Stars consuming themselves
Like bombs,
And all the while, that hysterical
Clicking and chirping, those beating wings.

Once I saw a bat
Dead on a road—
Wings outstretched but shattered.
I can sympathize with the compulsion to dive into cones of light,
Run towards a small speck of sun
Then burst into pure thought.
That bat in the gravel
Knew the value
Of image.

Tonight, my mind shimmers
Like a stigmatism.
My nerves are quick like knives
To an ear.
I told you: I am a bat,
Spasmotic and desperate in this cold darkness,
Plunging again and again into those headlights.

toy

I relished your ugliness today.
Your baby doll hair hung like
    tangled chains around a
Hideous celluloid face, melted
    by the
Fire of Passionate Desire that
    once ruled your careless
    life.
Those distant plastic eyes,
Man-made and
Man-destroyed,
Were ripped from their
    frigid cradles.
They held on to last impressions
    by polyester threads of
Hope.
    And all those years of braces
        gone to waste.
Only piano keys remained.
    plink
        plink
    Your teeth danced to
    the ground with a most
    glorious sound!
Too bad you couldn't sing for
Your bow-mouth was tied in
Knots.
    mumble
        moan
            help?
                NO
Nothing.
You really should play in the
    traffic more often.

Tribal Queen of Washington, D.C.

She is dark.
The black body suit
a second skin
matching the ebony of the first.

Gold clustered on
every finger
looping chains spiralling
her neck
metallic hoops
big enough to stick a fist through
orbitting cocoa earlobes
Sparkling jewelry
constellations in her
midnight sky
Galactic ornament
fitting for this
tribal queen of
Washington, D.C.

A flash of rings
a jangling of bracelets
and her dance of
    Morrison
    Dumas
    Douglas
begins.

Gestures to emphasize
the story
so powerful it pulls back
the fullness of her lips
sends her teeth
protruding forward
as if the gale of
pent-up words,
on their release,
have the power to
bend gum and bone.

A ship of slavery
tight-packed
close-breathed
stinking
crying

hating
NO! NOT SLAVERY!
GIVE ME A STORY OF FREEDOM
is her story
    Morrison's
    Dumas'
    Douglas'
story.

Told again by this young woman
who has in the crease of
her forehead
the knowing
of the ancient
Black matriarch.

Reaching down into
the roundness of
her mid-section
dipping deep into the
Grecian Urn
of Blackness,
Womanhood,
the golden belt
around her middle
is again the
iron of chains.

Hand pale against the
white
pages of my notes,
I can only wish for
a swole-belly
full of suffering
instead of dignity that has been
handed me too easily.

She calls Morrison a witch
for capturing
Blackness
on white pages,
blowing kisses immediately to take the
sting out.

But she is a witch, too
swole-bellied,
full of Black magic,
magical Blackness.

Tradeoff

Here son. Take this tissue and wipe off your make-up.
Don't let your mother see you like this.
"Why, dad? Mom wears make-up."
No damn son of mine is going to wear damn face paint.
"What's the difference in my make-up and
your $400 suit with its fashionable name?"
What?
"They both hide who we are."
I am this suit. I traded the last ten years
of my life for this suit.
"I got the make-up for $10. Dad, I think
you got screwed."

Jenni Schlechty

Corpse

I woke up with a corpse next to me. A familiar corpse, yes, but I still found it baffling that a new day had enlightened me to a body, changed by death. She was the girl I had made love to just the night before. I was not surprised to find her cold; she had warned me that it could indeed happen this way.

She looked beautiful. It had always been my delight to watch her sleep, and now that her sleep was permanent, I felt a sense that she had somehow been victorious. Victorious over— well, perhaps only she knows that. Not even the motion of breathing interrupted her now. Her breath had been stolen and placed in some gap in the earth that I will never find. Of course, I had stolen her breath many times before, but she had always taken it back with a giggle that made me smile. I did not think about placing blame. I give her too much credit for that. I trust her, and to annoy her now would be pointless.

I thought about how right she had been; how well she knew! She had been becoming less and less alive for some time (even I could see that) so I felt no regret, no remorse. After all, isn't dying the same as becoming progressively less alive? She had taught me that one should never be trapped into thinking that Death is a function of Time. No. Death is a function of Life, just as Darkness is a function of Light (or is it the other way around?) How much she knew about me! She was *becoming* me, and now there is no need for me to become her. She had saved me from that. And such a strange salvation... But, she had also told me that she was stranger than I knew.

I kissed her, gently, as she liked, and I found her lips cold. But then I remembered how she used to chew ice then kiss me, just to watch me squirm. That was one of her favorite tricks, so I laughed aloud, and heard the echo of my own voice in the empty room. Then I heard her say, "Make me laugh, Danny, the way you always do." So without thinking, I looked downward and then up at her and clicked my tongue between my teeth, and I hear a titter of laughter from some far-off place.

With that, I got up and left her exactly as she lay—exactly as I had held her while the heat escaped her. I whispered a soft "goodbye," and I realized that it was the only one I had ever said to her. As I shut the door behind me, I heard the ringing of her voice saying "Never, never go..."

I fell to the floor and felt my soul stripped from me. I cried to her and asked Chessie to come for me. I cried, just as I had laughed with her such a long time ago— such a very long time ago.

Scott Klenzak

Michael Monroe

David Gregory

David Gregory

Ma tells me that her husband
my grandfather, bought an old
Model T after his troopship
came back from France,
and using his cane for the clutch
drove from Philly to Norwood

This land, woven together
by spindly, tangled pines
he cleared, I imagine, swinging
an axe like he swings
those golf clubs, precariously
shifting his weight
to his one good leg, then
back again to his wooden one

Then Ma is jealous as she says:
"And he lived there, in that place,
with this woman I call 'Horse Woman,'
because he never says her name.
I do not know if they married,
it was for two years,
and she left after that"
and Ma's eyes
they are foggy roads
"but I can tell you this:
I know that he loved her oh yes
he certainly did love her."

So I pace old almost-trails
where those horses they raised,
I suppose, moved from gray
wood barn to piney woods
and think how
there is no beach here,
like at Normandy, and
it is this secret between

my grandpa and me, when
we smoke on his porch
and he is quiet sometimes
oh so quiet
there are cars and horses
in the wind from the lake
and I am moved and
only then do I pray
that he will never
sell that land

Game Day

My father, handing me that perfect white
tube, said "take care of them."
And so, after every practice, always
after every game, I rubbed
the stuff into that deep, lined
leather, dark as our souls were
on those beautiful green lawns,
those jungles thick
with the smell of struggle.

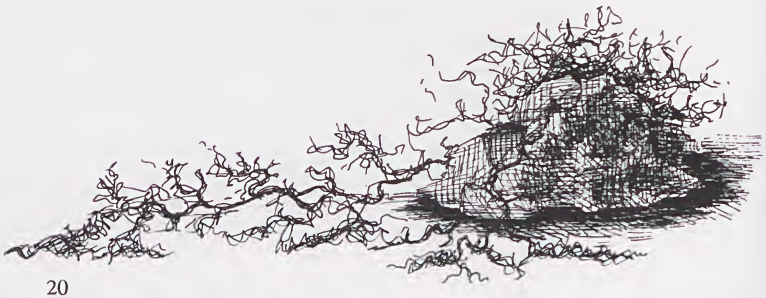
And I remember those good games,
on my toes at centerfield,
chalk kicked up,
a fog around my cleats,
our mothers cheers
of enthusiasm, of ignorance,
and our fathers
torn apart inside over
a millions things
silent and hard
in the eyes, waiting
for that first goal.

Kelly Corbett

Abandoned

My mother doesn't wear her wedding ring anymore.
I found it in the purple jewelry box
Her hand is empty like the cookie jar.

But my father still sits in the den.
with his feet propped up on the muddy brown couch
He looks blankly into the T.V.
and the Time magazine lies ignored in his lap.
In his mind her desertion is only temporary
After all, she still comes home at night
curling up on the same couch in the same den;
regal like a cat, she gloats over her freedom
marking her own territory
after he has gone to bed.
But he hasn't noticed that
the light on her finger has gone out.



Let's Talk About Anger

The naked light bulb swings
crazily,
reflecting the murky swirl within
the crumpled man's eyes
as he leans forward,
his stagnant breath flush against my face,
oddly comforting
contrasting with his words:
Let's talk about anger, you and I.
Lean in very close
Look deeply into my eyes
Deeper.
Do you see?
Do you see the field that I see?
Smoke rising lazily, steam
Emerging victorious from
exploded corpses strewn
about.
Drink of the suffering. Go ahead.
Tilt the cup for the last droplets.
They look like blood?
Well look around you.
Bodies, dead husks oozing red
Clotted clumps pooling their resources.
Their faces?
Oh, they are the faceless
They are the anonymous statistics.

What?
The smell?
Oh, they took care of that too.
They poured LIME on the bodies so that they would
not smell.
After all,
Making death palatable;
That is the name of the game
of war.

Danya Pilgrim

Eternal Flame

It is still dark when I slip out of bed. A sickle moon throws tree shadows against the wall where the dark leaves shiver in the chill breeze. My sisters do not wake. They shiver briefly, then turn, seeking the warmth of the displaced blankets. The morning air does not bother me as I walk down the hall; the morning air is not so cold.

I close the bathroom door and turn on the light. I bend over the tub to turn on the water, and even though the hot tap is on full force, only a trickling of cold water begins to fill the tub. I stand, and turning, catch a glimpse of myself in the mirror. All that I see in that look is a sleepy Black girl with long pressed hair because I turn away quickly. I am not used to the strangeness of my own self yet. I have not been alive long enough.

I step into the tub and wash hastily. Goosebumps rise all over me, but the water is not so cold, and I am done quickly. There is not that much of me after all, and with only one bathroom for the seven people in the house, I have grown up washing quickly. I clean up and leave. On my way to the bedroom I pass my mother. She nods at me, lays her hand lightly on my arm before moving on.

I dress in half light. Pull on my stockings, pull up my slip. The black dress hangs freshly washed and freshly pressed in the open closet. My sisters' dresses hang beside it like family members pressing close about an open grave. I am sorry that Charlotte has to wear black. She is still so young; sleeping she looks like a baby, lying on her back, mouth slightly open, her lashes laying long against her brown cheeks. Sara sleeps curled into herself, and restless. I am surprised that she did not wake when I got up. But then she is not all that old either. She just tries to act so womanish that sometimes I forget, and I try very hard not to remember myself when I was her age. I don't like to remember that the world used to be full of rainbows, and even the rain was warm. But at eighteen, I have stopped looking for rainbows. Besides, the rain seems too much like tears, and I have done enough crying of my own.

I walk down the stairs skipping the second to last one because it creaks. Everyone should be up now anyway. I pass through the living room and into the kitchen. Nana is standing in front of the gas stove, "April, eat some oatmeal."

She always knows who it is without turning around. When I was little I used to ask her how she always knew when it was me. "When you're as old as I am, you'll be able to do it too," she told me. I don't want to be as old as Nana is. I don't want to be old. I don't want to have wrinkles, or arthritis, or gray hair. I don't want to think of the years gone by, of the friends and relatives that I've laid to rest. I don't... "No thank you, Nana. I don't want anything." She opens her mouth, then shuts it. She turns her back to me, muttering under her breath. I smile then, but don't give in. I go through the back door to stand on the porch.

The sun is up. I walk up to the rail and look down. It is overgrown with

weeds where the flowers used to be. Now there are daisies, buttercups, dandelions, delicate Queen Anne's lace, clover, and Creeping Charlie. It is a child's paradise. I remember when it used to be an African jungle on hot days at noon. When my girlfriends came over, it became a garden where we would have tea in the cool of the afternoon; if my brother and his friends were there we could play house. Sometimes my dolls would go to sleep there, among the grasses, under the stars, in the friendly darkness. I cannot remember the last time there was amity in the dark. Is God in the darkness? There is ecstasy in the darkness. There is pain in darkness. There is cover in darkness. And there are men in white robes and white hoods in the darkness.

But it is morning. I raise my head to the light. The heat comes down on me, kissing my face and my neck. It has been a long time since I was kissed in the sunlight. I want to be kissed. I want my lover. I want David. I want equality. I want to be able to sit at a lunch counter and be served like a lady. I want sunlight twenty-four hours a day. I realize that I am lying to myself. What do I want? What do I really want? Peace maybe.

"April," my mother calls me.

"Yes, Momma?"

"It's time to leave."

I walk slowly into the house. I lock the door, shutting out the light, sliding the bolts shut one by one. There is no one in the kitchen now. They are all gathered in the living room: my stern father, my quiet momma, Sara and Lottie, Nana and Abraham. I look past my brother quickly. He frightens me. From across a room I can feel the anger suppressed in his lean body. He is only fifteen, a year older that Sara, but he is closer to manhood than Sara is to womanhood. Sara still has time to be a child. Abe must be grown now because he will die soon. He is getting too old. He is getting too sly. He is getting too angry. He is getting too intelligent. And he has always been too black.

Momma hands me my hat. It is a black cartwheel with a wide brim that hides my face. We file out of the house, fall in line behind my father and his mother. Momma holds Abe's arm, Sara and Lottie walk solemnly together, and I walk alone. The church is only eight blocks away, and we walk briskly. As we near the church we see more people. We pass and intone, "Good morning." I try not to hear the other words that people say when we pass. I try not to see them staring at me. I hate to be stared at.

I am glad when we enter the church. I am glad that we go right down the aisle for the viewing. There is a bit of a line, but there is nothing I can do except clench my hands in my dress and try not to look up too much. I come parallel to the first pew, and I look up, right into the face of his mother. Her eyes are sunken deep into her head. Her skin seems to sag as though from fatigue, but she stands unsupported. David is the third son that she has lost. There are only two left now, and her two daughters. The sons stand at either end of the coffin, and the daughters

sit in a pew, their faces hidden in handkerchiefs. They raise their eyes to look at me. I wonder at first if they know who I am for their eyes are nearly swollen shut from crying. But the youngest gives me a tremulous smile, the eldest nods her head. I reach out to touch their shaking black shoulders.

I am almost abreast of the coffin now. I can see him. He is dressed in his black suit; the white shirt is immaculate with a high starched collar which hides his neck from view, and his tie lies smooth, the knot tight underneath the flesh of his chin. He is so pale. His skin has lost its brilliant dark glow. It is pale like deadwood washed up on the shore. His eyelids are closed, and the lashes are long. He sleeps, and yet he is not asleep at all. I want to kiss his full lips. I want to touch his face. I am afraid of what they will say. I am afraid I have no right. I press my hands against my sides and move on.

We settle into a pew in the back of the church. Two ladies in front of us are talking. "Harrison just outdid himself. David looks just like he's asleep, so peaceful."

"So young to die like that. All of Mabel's boys'll die young I'm afraid. And David was so intelligent, and well mannered, and respectful, and godfearing. He looks so peaceful."

I close my ears against the words. They know nothing about him. Preacher begins to speak, but I cannot listen. They do not know him. I know him. I know him asleep, his body warm against my side, and his heartbeat strong under my hand; his eyes lightly shut and the breath whispering through his nostrils. I know him dreaming; his eyes seeing a future world as his hands hold a book or a newspaper, an arm around my shoulder. I know him angry. I know him frustrated. I know him young and reckless. I know him alive.

We leave the church. The body goes by in the hearse, and those who have cars drive. We crowd in with some neighbors. I am glad that we won't have to walk. I don't think that I could. I want to be strong. But what is the strength of one? David thought that he was strong enough to drink at the fountain for whites only. He thought that he could walk in their park. He did a lot of thinking. He thought that they might kill him. I knew that they would. And yet it didn't make any difference. I still loved him. I let him love me. And soon love will be buried six feet deep underground.

They have decided to bury him next to his brothers; three graves all in a row. The sun is directly overhead as we gather around the coffin, suspended over the yawning hole in the earth. "Ashes to ashes; dust to dust." We begin to lay our flowers on the coffin. After I place the flower on the domed top I do not look back. He is lost to me. And I know that I cannot fight the cold that envelopes him. I cannot warm him.

We pass through the white part of town. I raise my eyes and sit straight in the seat of the car. There are those that sit on their porches and lean out of their shops. There are those that look out of their windows. They all stare. And then I feel the cold. And the fire in his eyes is burnt out like spent torches, and he cannot warm me.

But there are others. Maybe they will not be shot where they stand. Maybe they will not be beaten to death. Maybe they will not be caught and lynched. Maybe they will not be nineteen years old.

Once home I take the stairs two at a time, and they do not stop me. I strip off my clothes and fling them on the bed. I am tired of going to funerals. I am tired of wearing black. I am tired of fighting and fighting. But it will not be the last time. It cannot be the last time if there is to be some sense out of all the deaths. Death cannot be useless. The living will not let it be. I begin to pray. My prayers will preserve the heat that is in me, the living flame, and it is not so cold anymore. It is not so cold.

Rachel Smith

A Gift to the Manatees

It's a shame you two in love yelling at each other like that.
Here's my prediction: by 1994 guaranteed.
What the fuck is your problem?
You. You're my fucking problem.
This is my town. My house. Do you see Wait Chapel? Go back to your world.
I love you. **What?**
It's not for my cat, it's for my girlfriend.
It's not the same game everyone else is playing.
Is she your girlfriend? Yeah, I guess she is.
I don't when I'm drunk. **Afraid of not being able to perform?** Yes.
Psycho Bitch from Hell.
I don't go below the bellybutton.
Please, I'm about to passout.
You know what? I like your ankles behind my ears.
I quit smoking. Yeah, right.
I am almost twenty-two years old and I can't even have a beer in my own room. Dooley's rules.
I just want to be your friend. To be able to say Hay what's up?
Get rid of him.
You're following me.
Yes. He and I are following you.
You're following me.
No, I live here, last time I checked that was my name on the door- not yours.
She's the one.
Will you spend the night with me?
Yes.
Tell your friend he needs a hair cut.
Will you spend the night with me?
Yes.
If someone better looking comes up to me and ... well I'd go.

Backstreets

While people in the street
stand squinting or laughing,
corralled before an evangelist
slamming his hand on the book,
I notice another, unseen
behind the Farmer's Hardware.
A leper, only one in town, leaps
from puddle to puddle making
sure to splash the middle.
The ridges of footprints make
islands, separating the swirling waters,
with a vault in the center.

Amanda Eller

The Funhouse

I pushed you through the mirror-
Rippling and shimmering like water
reflecting the stone sun
on fields of white.
It shuddered in the chill
and exploded-
Shards sliced through the air
like a mass of dark birds,
thick in the air
like smoke.

I pushed you through face first-
your back to the stars in the ceiling,
eyes lost in the growing circles
of a stone's throw.
But you gave a glance back as the pieces shattered
which caught and froze
in the thousand tiny mirrors which pierced my skin,
filling my eyes with blood.
I can barely see the light of full-grown stars.

I shall pick the shards out one by one
and leave them where they fall-
your bloodless,
bloodied images-
and walk through the mirror opposite,
its images of you;
walk through the rippling waters,
burning like flames,
walk out into the carnival crowd
bleeding,
the wounds closing
quietly
like a child's prayer
ascending on an angel's stormy wings.

Graveyard at Fancy Gap

Plastic flowers,
stones,
and grass
patient all the way to the gate.

And each strand of fencewire
hums.

While, deep
underground, stars
wait to rise
through bone,
dust,
between my toes
to rush against the bells:
the smouldering leather boots of the dead.

Sloane Frantz

Beating and Blending

"Our mothers and grandmothers, some of them: moving
to music not yet written" Alice Walker

I see music up ahead.
A blank book was pried open
and it has been written down,
like a history,
yet it is short and soon
I fear
I will catch up with the pen.

I dance through the notes,
beating like a spoon in a bowl
clicking like four wheels on a stroller
tapping like a nail on a keyboard.

This is new and it feels
good.
Like silk on the shoulder at dusk
like drops dropping on blue blooms
like cat fur twisting around the ankle bone.

We see music up ahead.
The Voice grows louder.
Old notes
small and few
are many pages back.

We see bold black patterns
sung inward, in
harmony
harmony
harmony.
Rich and thick,
beating and blending.

We see music up ahead.
Day by year,
pushing the pen
farther down the page.

Dear Adrienne,

I am The Angel
floating through your house.
I slide the thick lead off your page,
I send the echoes
from the nursery
and blow them down
into your eardrum.
I tap guilt firmly into your temples,
I blur your thoughts with clouds
before they become red salty words.
I am The Angel,
holier than thou,
whiter
and safer.

If not for me,
solitary you,
would not need
the pen and the page.

You will never blink away
The Angel.
You will never stop me from pecking.
I am making lists for you,
and they grow like vines
as you sit,
nailed loosely in your chair.
Even in The Room of your own
I slide through the keyhole
like a hot birth,
whiter
and safer.
I am
The Angel.

Welcome Back to the Sixties, Rilly

Review by Chris Hoerter

Read this as quickly as possible. And if you hear helicopters hovering over your home, burn everything and run for your life - it's probably a governmental paramilitary strike force with nothing better to do than shoot you for something you did two decades ago.

This is just a taste of what must swirl through the gray matter of Thomas Pynchon's mind these days, and what runs through the thoughts of his characters in *Vineland*.

The book opens with Pynchon's central paranoid character, Zoyd Wheeler, preparing for his annual transfenestrative act of insanity near the small town of Vineland, in northern California. Soon enough, governmental bad guy Brock Vond shows up in town with a small army, and takes over Zoyd's home as headquarters. Vond seeks Zoyd's ex-wife, ex-activist and FBI snitch Frenesi Gates, and wants to use both Zoyd and Prairie, his daughter by Frenesi, to help him get what he wants. So off the reader is taken in the chase, joining Prairie, Zoyd and Frenesi in a frenetic attempt to escape Uncle Sam in all of his trippy manifestations. Pynchon introduces a bizarre cast of minor characters, including ninjas, TV addicts ("tube-freaks"), mobsters, and violence-loving teen rockers, and offers a quick look at the flaky cosmic scene of northern California.

Well, it's been awhile, Tom. The last words we heard from Pynchon were released seventeen years ago in the form of *Gravity's Rainbow*. Since then, nobody's really (rilly!) been sure where he's been. Word has it that after Pynchon's FBI, CIA, and other paperwork and computer records confirming his existence disappeared, he ran off to Mexico to set up shop with his typewriter and a bottle of mescal. It is apparent that during the hiatus, the typewriter has grown rusty and more than enough mescal has been downed to bring on its more interesting side effects. While *Vineland* is not as much a dud as Pynchon's last novel set in California, *The Crying of Lot 49*, the novel is certainly not up to the standards of *Gravity's Rainbow*.

Pynchon's main thrust seems to be that we cannot escape our past, and ignoring that fact will only make our lives much worse than they already are. The present action of the book is set during that frightening time in 1984 just before Reagan's re-election, but after the first four chapters or so the reader finds himself grappled by Pynchon's pre-set spiraling time machine from which there is no escape. Past and present blend into one confusing convergence, as the characters of the book gradually drift together into the same dangerous orbit, revolving around their gravitic and common past interactions. The journey is rather exhausting, and one tends to be relieved rather than enlightened at the end of it.

On the other hand, *Vineland* is worth the read, if not for the manipulative dynamics, at least for Pynchon's style. Even if the author has been a bit of a recluse of late, he has certainly had his television tuned in. Pynchon's language is a wacky consortium of slang, dialect, intellect, and Vanna White. He constantly amazes and

tickles the reader with creativity and comic expression (yes, real funny stuff, not the black humor expected). The tone is considerably more light hearted than in previous works; even if motion sickness has been induced by the time machine, one can usually manage to laugh it off.

At the end of *Vineland*, after a nice nap, one is more liable to watch their back for government tails, to not give out important numbers and to initiate a double-blind (spy patois) routine for receiving mail. You also might find yourself digging the old polaroids out of that dusty trunk in the attic and thinking about what really happened to Uncle George when he took that last long trip to the West Coast. Ponder what kind of hold the past, your past, really has on you, not to mention what kind of hold the FBI has on your future. And if you find you can't deal with it, you can always round up some ass-kicking ninja nuns and open a non-violent vegetarian pizza parlor somewhere near, say, Vineland. It's groovin' dude. Rilly.

So It's Not Another Gravity's Rainbow

Review by Janet Ramey

This year, Thomas Pynchon finally released his long-awaited fourth novel to an audience ravenous from the 17-year hiatus between servings of his work. By all admissions, it is not work of depth and meaning comparable to his last novel, *Gravity's Rainbow*, winner of the National Book Award. In the arena of new fiction, however, *Vineland* can hold its own.

Set in the Northern California logging town of whose name the novel bears, Pynchon's latest work portrays the government as an intrusive force which seeks to control all citizens either through its payroll or by coercion. Linking the characters together in this web of tyranny, Pynchon explores the implications of such totalitarian attempts to control of the personal sphere.

Though the novel contains the usual bizarre plethora of strangely-named characters, its actions centers around Frenesi Gates, a woman whose enigmatic beauty and charisma inspires the actions of the other major characters in the novel. Zoyd, her ex-husband, spends the novel trying to get over the fantasy that he and Frenesi, now long divorced, will get back together. Similarly, the psychopathic Federal Prosecutor, Brock Vond, seeks to regain control he once exercised over her by using Prairie, Frenesi's daughter by Zoyd. Having never known her mother, Prairie seeks to understand the dark story of Frenesi's life through the memories of DL, a female ninja who knew her through their late '60's involvement in 24fps, a

radical film-making cooperative. The intertwining of these efforts produces the novel.

Vineland employs many of the the same conventions as Pynchon's earlier novels, but does so with a different twist. He develops the cinematic theme which served as a minor motif in earlier works and uses it to define the life and action of not only Frenesi, but her parents, Hal and Sasha, through their involvement in the Hollywood industry during the '40's and '50's. Similarly, the emphasis on the power television exerts in American society stands dominant in the foreground of the novel. The use of television trivia replaces the profuse historical allusions and motifs found in *Gravity's Rainbow, V,* and *The Crying of Lot 49. Vineland* allusions recall the banalities of the Brady Bunch, the Three Stooges and Flipper reruns. The danger of depending on such references is that of producing a work whose meaning will be unfathomable to future generations. If, as Pynchon would lead the reader to believe, television is a growing source of control within American society, then these allusions will function for future readers in the same way literary allusions do presently. If not, this work is destined to become no more than trivia, an odd period piece not unlike the hoop skirt or bouffant hairdo, which serves for light amusement rather than serious social commentary.

Though not of equal caliber as his other works, *Vineland* provides an interesting diversion as well as a showcase of Pynchon's satirical humor and vivid imagination. Don't expect major revelations, and you should enjoy this amusing and well-written work.

The Student

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